

# Mongolia and the Prospects for a Multilateral Security Mechanism in Northeast Asia

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## Abstract

The region of Northeast Asia is historically complicated and nearly all of its members prefer principles of Westphalia. The so-called North Korean nuclear issue and the coinciding interests of the Great Powers affect regional security. The region also has many problematic issues like unresolved claims among nations on territorial and historical disputes. But there are still possible foundations to succeed in enhancing Northeast Asian multilateral security institutions. Although the process of dialogue is slow, Inter-Korean relations have gained impressive ground. It must be noted that the main reason for the willingness to cooperate among Northeast Asian nations is economic interdependence, while politically and security-wise, defense dialogue is becoming a significant matter. Many scholars stress the constraints of changing the current inflexible system to a much more sophisticated, cooperative, and integrated arrangement. To create such a mechanism, the region should draw from its significant experience of the de-facto mechanism in the Six Party Talks and the Common Development-Based Mechanism.

For maintaining regional peace and security, Mongolia always seeks to participate in the Security Mechanism of Northeast Asia and as a member of the international community. Mongolia values its model-democracy and market economy in the Northeast Asian region. The dynamic diplomacy of Mongolia pursues a Nuclear Weapon-Free Status, and participation in UN peacekeeping operations, which are appreciated by the international community. Mongolia has significant resources, means, willingness, and interests to form Northeast Asian multilateral security mechanisms, and has much to contribute to the development of Northeast Asian relations.

**Keywords:** multilateral security mechanisms, negative factors, opportunities and challenges for Mongolia, positive developments, regional security, Six-Party talks and common development.

## Introduction

The end of the Cold War did not bring about the perpetual peace long anticipated by humankind. The world stepped into the twenty-first century not only keeping the old

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perils of interstate and intra-state civil wars and armed insurgencies, but also seeing the rise of new non-traditional threats, such as international terrorism, the spread of pandemics, environmental degradation and organized cross-border crimes. As a result, the United Nations (UN) has called upon countries to revise their respective national security concepts and join efforts in creating a global collective security mechanism, designed to address the common challenges and to strive for meeting common developmental goals (United Nations 2004: 11).

Nations in Europe have joined to stand up to their common threats and challenges, paving the foundations for such multilateral mechanisms as the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty (NATO), the Council of Europe (CE), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) etc. The strategy being deliberated and implemented is to meet those challenges in a cooperative and collective manner of action.

In comparison to Europe, the Asia Pacific is less unified; however, the specific “Asian” forms of integration processes have already been launched at various sub-regional and even supra-regional levels. Slowly but surely these settings are gaining momentum. These include multilateral security consultative forums, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), as well as economic cooperation mechanisms such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN Plus One, ASEAN Plus Three and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Another such organization is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), initiated by Russia and China and joined by the four Central Asian independent states that formerly were constituent republics of the Soviet Union. In addition, creation of the East Asian Community (EAC) is underway.

In that sense, what about Northeast Asia (NEA), where three of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council border each other? Will it ever be a sub-region where unresolved problems stemming from the Cold War, such as crises on the Korean Peninsula or across the Taiwan Strait, in addition to numerous other territorial and historical disputes, can be resolved? And this is despite the presence of the three UN Security Council permanent members, an organ entrusted with the noble task of safeguarding world peace and ensuring the new global order. What are the constraints to create a multilateral security mechanism in this sub-region? Will such a mechanism ever emerge? If so, will or will not such a process need the input of small states? These and other questions will remain the focus for policymakers, decision makers and scholars in international relations and security studies. In this regard many scholars are offering a multitude of visions and proposals; I hereby intend to suggest my own insights from a scholar’s point of view.

## **Negative Factors Affecting Regional Security**

### *The Korean Peninsula*

Despite being both a strategic flashpoint and a hot spot in Northeast Asia, and with the potential of becoming a battleground, the Korean Peninsula is often believed to offer a unique opportunity in sub-regional dialogue. Regarding this aspect, many scholars believe that the North Korean nuclear problem encourages nations in NEA and beyond to define their mutual and common problems, and attempt to resolve the pressing problems by means of negotiations; and furthermore, that these negotiations can evolve into a viable regional security dialogue mechanism. However, the issue remains to clarify and assess every point included in the joint communiqué released during the Fourth Round of the Six Party Talks (Cossa 2005).

### *Taiwan Strait*

The Taiwan Strait issue should be viewed as an internal affair and a separatism-related domestic security concern of the People's Republic of China (PRC), rather than an "international" issue. However, as this very issue has its roots in the US involvement in East Asian affairs, and can plausibly be solved with US engagement, we still need to assess this problem as if it were an international dispute.

### *Strategic tensions among the Great Powers*

This refers to the strategic competition between the United States on the one hand, and Russia and China on the other. Despite having a common stance on the issues relevant to global peace and security, these powers seriously differ on the status quo of the world order. While the US strives to maintain the unipolarity, Russia and China join their efforts to establish a multipolar world order. This became evident when during the July 2005 SCO Summit, its member states pressed the US to define the final date of the withdrawal of its troops from bases located in Central Asian states.

USA-China. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the political and economic might of its successor, the Russian federation, has significantly deteriorated, and Russia needs some time to reclaim its superpower status. Accordingly, China has emerged as the key "strategic competitor" as well as the new "cooperative partner" for the United States in the new century.

Russia-China. As these two powers engage in a strategic partnership of cooperation in the twenty-first century, the two nations work together in matters of regional and global security and economic development, and have no clear disagreements on global issues. However, a clandestine competition exists between them as to who will exert more political influence in the region and obtain dominance in the world economy; moreover, as China progresses to becoming a powerhouse, this tension will intensify.

China-Japan. Sino-Japanese relations have accelerated into a new stage since the beginning of the 1990s. The "new stage" means "mutual partnership" economically, yet "mutual competition" politically, gradually evolving beyond the inter-governmental relations into affecting the people-to-people relations (Mori 2005). For Japan, relations with China is vital. "Basic Strategies for Japan's Foreign Policy in the Twenty-first Century: New Era, New Vision, New Diplomacy", a policy paper drafted in November 2002 by the Task Force on Foreign Relations for the Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, states:

The relationship with China is the most important theme in Japan's foreign policy at the outset of the 21st century. For both countries, the relationship is one that interweaves "cooperation and coexistence" with "competition and friction" ... As regards the history problem, both Japan and China while drawing lessons from history, it is time they liberated themselves from an "enchantment with history" and aimed for a future oriented relationship. (Task Force on Foreign Relations for the Prime Minister 2002)

### *Territorial disputes*

Russia-Japan. The unresolved dispute over the southern Kurile Islands, labeled by the Japanese side as the “Northern Territories,” as well as the absence of a peace treaty between the two countries despite the termination of hostilities 60 years ago, constitute serious restraints to the development of, and acceleration to, a new level of Russo-Japanese relations.

Japan-China and Japan-South Korea. Unresolved territorial disputes that exist between Japan and China, and Japan and South Korea obviously hinder the confidence-building process in the sub-region and harm the implementation of large-scale infrastructure and energy projects.

### *Historical issues: Japan-China and Japan-South Korea*

We are all aware that continued publication in Japan of the historical textbooks that attempt to justify Japan’s role and committed atrocities during the Second World War, and frequent visits by Japanese Prime Ministers to the Yasukuni Shrine, containing the remains of convicted war criminals, seriously damage the relations between Japan on the one hand, and China and Korea, on the other. In dealing with Japan, China had always had a useful “card” named the “historical issues,” and there is a strategic belief that as long as this situation exists, China will always hold that pivotal advantage over Japan. If previously the Chinese Communist Party and the PRC Government regulated Sino-Japanese relations, now it becomes more evident that the popular sentiments and response of the masses cannot easily be controlled.

The fifth visit to Yasukuni Shrine by former Prime Minister Koizumi once again triggered a reaction from China and South Korea, and caused a diplomatic response, creating a trend that is likely to stay. In particular, an envoy of the Republic of Korea (RoK) and then President Roh Moo-hyun announced that South Korea would suspend the meeting of the South Korean and Japanese leaders scheduled during the November 2005 APEC Summit. Also, he announced that the preparatory meeting for the RoK-Japan Summit, scheduled for December 2005, would be postponed. Former South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon named the Yasukuni visits as a “serious provocation,” and Chinese authorities suspended the visit to Beijing by the Japanese Foreign Minister, scheduled on October 23, 2005 (Hyatad 2005: 2073).

On the other hand, many in Japan disapproved of the Prime Minister’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine, and perceive it as anti-constitutional action (Przystup 2005: 122):

On July 26 [2005] the Osaka High Court rejected an appeal filed by a 338-member class action suit of Japanese and Korean war-bereaved families seeking compensation for the prime minister’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine on Aug. 13, 2001. The suit alleged that the prime minister’s visit violated the principle of separation of church and state.

### *Increase in defense posture and military spending*

Northeast Asia is home to the four largest militaries (USA, Russia, China and North Korea, each with over 1 million active-duty servicemen) and the three nations with the largest military expenditures (USA, Russia and China), making it the most militarized sub-region of the world. The United States criticizes China for estimating two to three

times lower than its actual defense spending (US Office of the Secretary of Defense 2005: 21).

On the other hand, some states in the region openly declare others as perceived threats in their respective security assessments, defense policy papers or armed forces reform programs, which allow for the increase in defense expenditure and military growth. For instance, listing North Korea as one of the threats to South Korea in the RoK “Defense White Paper” (RoK Ministry of National Defence 2004: 332), and naming China and North Korea as threats to Japanese security (Japan Defense Agency 2004: 607), certainly hinders confidence-building in the sub-region.

### **Positive Developments in Regional Security**

Despite the aforementioned challenges that persist in the relations among states in NEA, the following can be listed as foundations that assist in the formation of multilateral security institutions:

#### *Economic interdependence*

Regionalism is gaining momentum in NEA and economic interdependence in the sub-region is deepening (Batchimeg 2005: 79). In general, the trend for the Asia Pacific is an emerging Sino-centric economic cooperation orbit. China’s share in Japan’s net trade volume constitutes 12.2 percent, second only to that of the USA. China occupies first place in imports to Japan with 19.7 per cent of the share. China became the largest investor in the RoK in 2002, largest exporter in 2003, and largest trading partner in 2004, bypassing the USA (Korea Economic Institute and Korea Institute of International Economic Policy 2005: 43). Bilateral trade between PRC and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) reached USD\$1.38 billion in 2004 (Korea Economic Institute et al 2005: 55). As the economic cooperation between PRC and DPRK deepens, the latter’s dependence on the former also increases.

#### *Situation on the Korean Peninsula*

Although the North Korean nuclear issue remains the most threatening one, it nevertheless offers a glimpse of hope for a positive solution. Latest developments surrounding the multilateral negotiation allow us to see the situation in NEA from a different, somewhat optimistic, angle.

A Joint Statement on the principles of action to further solve the nuclear issue, released at the Fourth Round of the Six Party Talks, show the effectiveness of multilateralism, compromise and consensus in dealing with pressing issues (*People’s Daily Online* 2005).

Intra-Korean relations pose a significant success as well. Mutual visits by citizens of the two Koreas have consistently increased, and in 2004 reached the 20,000 threshold. This number, estimated in 2004 as 26,534, sharply contrasts with those of 2002 at 13,877, and 2003, at 16,303 (Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification 2005: 22). In 2003, trade volume between the two Koreas constituted USD\$697.04 million, decreasing by 3.8 per cent from that of the previous year. With regard to military contacts, the first ever Inter-Korean General-level Military Talks were held on May 26, 2004 (RoK Ministry of Unification 2005: 32). Undoubtedly, the national unification Policy of Peace and Prosperity, launched by the RoK President, aimed at “promoting peace on the Korean

Peninsula and pursuing mutual prosperity for North and South Korea and contributing to prosperity in NEA,” provides a solid impetus to this process. Principles of this policy, as stated in the “White Paper on Korean Unification 2005,” are (RoK Ministry of Unification 2005: 17):

- (1) Resolve disputes through dialogue;
- (2) Seek mutual understanding and reciprocity;
- (3) Promote international cooperation based on the principle of “parties directly concerned”;
- (4) Form policies reflecting the will of the people.

DPRK has lately been engaging in selected, cautious steps to become more open in political and economic spheres. For instance, between 1998 and 1999 P’yongyang normalized its relations with only two Western nations, but since 2000, it normalized relations with 21 Western countries, and maintains normal relations with 23 of the 25 EU member states, with the exclusion of France and Estonia (Korea Economic Institute et al 2005: 56). The environment for foreign investment has improved to a certain degree via such measures, such as removing the ban on establishing private enterprises within DPRK boundaries by foreign citizens and reducing tariffs on electricity, water supply and other commodities (Korea Economic Institute et al 2005: 55). In addition, in spring 2005 the country opened its first ever web page, itself a progress deserving credit.<sup>2</sup>

#### Willingness to resolve territorial disputes

It is noticeable that a willingness to resolve territorial disputes is gradually emerging among the concerned parties, laying the foundations for exemplary models of such a dispute resolution. In particular the Chinese experience of settling its own border demarcation issues with Russia and Central Asian states can plausibly be used by other countries in an attempt to resolve the long-standing territorial dispute between Russia and Japan (Iwashita 2005: 67-80). Also, a mutual recognition of the existence of China and Japan’s territorial disputes and their decision to preserve the solution until favorable conditions emerge, may be used as an exemplary approach by the region’s nations.

#### Security and defense cooperation and dialogue

In recent years the sub-region witnessed significant development in bilateral defense relations and cooperation beyond the traditional treaty alliances with the USA. This included various forms, from ministerial-level visits and strategic consultative conferences at the high level, to mid-ranking officers’ meetings, exchanges between the branch service commands or geographical combatant commands, joint military exercises and drills, and academic exchanges between academies and research institutes. These bilateral contacts, especially those between Russia and the PRC, Russia and the USA, the PRC and USA – that were unthinkable during the Cold War – brought a thaw in relations among states in the region, reduced suspicions, and made the actors more predictable, thus, significantly contributing to the fight against common threats.

International conferences, training and workshops on security and defense, organized by major countries in the region, provided a very positive venue for the frank exchange of views on stressing issues of international and regional importance, as well

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<sup>2</sup> See “Naenara”: <http://www.kcckp.net/en> (accessed 10 July 2009).

as for a more close observation of each others' security strategies and defense postures. Some of these more prominent venues deserve special credit, namely:

*Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies.* The Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies' (APCSS) regular training courses, held in Honolulu, Hawai'i, are greatly valued, as they bring together military and civilian professionals from all over the Asia Pacific in a friendly atmosphere, and contribute much to the confidence-building of the region.

*Shangri-La Dialogue.* The *Shangri-La Dialogue*, held annually in Singapore under the joint auspices of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and the Republic of Singapore Government, brings the Ministers (Secretaries) of Defense from countries in the Asia Pacific region together for a multilateral forum; it is thus far the only defense ministerial-level mechanism that provides for frank exchange of opinions on issues concerning global and regional security, defense and regional cooperation (Lee 2005). It is therefore important for countries in the region to send their delegations to this event.

*Other forums.* Other notable forums include the Conference on Asia Pacific Security, annually hosted by the National Defense Institute of Japan; the Tokyo Defense Forum, organized by the Japan Defense Agency; the International Seminar on Military Science, organized by the national Defense Academy of Japan (Japan Defense Agency 2005: 23-25), as well as the International Security Symposium, annually hosted by the National Defense University of the PRC People's Liberation Army (PLA).

*ARF Deputy-Ministerial Conference.* The first ARF deputy-ministerial conference on regional security was held in November 2004 in Beijing, China. It brought together Deputy Ministers of Defense of the ARF member states and made a significant breakthrough in reducing mutual suspicions and the strengthening of confidence in regional relations (*People's Daily Online* 2004).

*ASEAN-led Process of Establishing the East Asian Community.* The ASEAN Plus Three mechanism, involving Japan, China and South Korea, and the current efforts to launch the grand integration within the EAC framework, will undoubtedly pave favorable foundations for creating multilateral security mechanisms in NEA.

### **Versions of Multilateral Security Mechanism**

A majority of scholars stress the need for replacing the current inflexible common defense arrangements in NEA with a new, cooperative security mechanism, created for the sake of a more integrated and prosperous NEA.

Without referring to all the existing experiences in building region-wide multilateral structures and settings, I will share my insights on a few specific versions proposed by scholars in the sub-region.

#### *Six Party Talks-based mechanism*

Many scholars propose creating a permanent regional security mechanism based on the current settings of the Six Party Talks, designed for handling the Korean Peninsula's

nuclear issue. An American scholar, Joseph R. Cerami, uses institutionalist theory and suggests

a cooperative strategy approach for building a counter-proliferation regime in Northeast Asia, ... to nurture a small group of like-minded states ... to build effective rules, organizations and enforcement mechanisms for developing an effective Northeast Asian security regime. (Cerami 2005)

Pang Zhongying from China identifies the following as key features of the NEA multilateral security mechanism:

It would include China and even a de-nuclearized North Korea. It would coexists [sic] with U.S.-led bilateral security relations. It is justified or legitimized by ongoing cooperative and constructive China-U.S. relations. It can help solve other regional security problems, including the Taiwan problem. It would lay the foundation for a future-oriented regional security community. (Zhongying 2004)

If the Six Party talks overcome its present deadlock and evolve into a regional security cooperation mechanism, and if Mongolia finds a place within it, more favorable conditions will emerge for Mongolia's external relations.

#### *Common development-based mechanism*

The theory on building a security structure through common development, proposed by a prominent Russian scholar Vasily Mikheev, has a more inclusive approach. According to Mikheev:

- Bilateral problems which cannot be resolved today should be “put off” until after a single economic, social and humanitarian field has been created based on the achievements of economic integration in the region, until after the issue forming a single political space has been raised, and when, consequently, questions ... are resolved “of their own accord” by the integration logic; and
- Internal problems are regulated by adapting the national security strategy to the present and future demands of the integration processes (Mikheev 2002: 9).

He further goes on to suggest that:

joint use of the factors of production is possible if a single legal sphere is formed to ensure a free movement of goods, financial flows, labor, and know-how throughout the region. This single legal sphere can be created via free trade zones in NEA, an integrated investment system, a monetary union with the subsequent transfer to a single currency in NEA; via uniform standards for goods production, an integrated system for auditing financial institutions; by abolishing visa regimes, by encouraging the mutual adaptation of education



and foreign language learning systems, and so on. (Mikheev 2002: 22)

Within this regard, I fully concur with Mikheev's proposal emphasizing the importance of active US political and economic participation in the formation of a NEA mechanism. On the other hand, this vision, if materialized, will provide a unique opportunity for landlocked Mongolia to not merely continue to economically depend on the two gigantic neighbors and be an aid recipient, but rather engage in a mutually beneficial interdependent partnership by exchanging labor and resources and receiving technological and financial support from other countries in NEA.

The future NEA security mechanism should not be an exclusive one that separates the sub-region from a broader region, but rather should evolve as an inclusive one that openly cooperates within various integration forms throughout the Asia Pacific and East Asia, and should coexist and complement the existing bilateral defense arrangements with the USA.

### **Opportunities and Challenges for Mongolia**

In creating a truly global environment for peace and security, not only global and regional powers, but small states too, should contribute an important part, as noted in the UN Secretary-General's address to the Mongolian Parliament during his visit to Mongolia in 2002 (Annan 2002).

As a sovereign member of the international community, Mongolia has been casting hopes on NEA while it strove to gain political and economic support during the past fifteen years of comprehensive reform and transition into a free, democratic society with a market economy. As the Foreign Policy Concept of Mongolia states, "conditions for joining the regional integration will be created by expanding the bilateral cooperation with countries within the region." ("Concept of Mongolia Foreign Policy" 1994: 40) Accordingly, the following actions were taken, namely (Tomorchuluun 2005):

- Since joining ARF in 1998, Mongolia has been actively and consistently participating in its activities at all levels, which is an important step to get closer to the ASEAN countries and strengthen Mongolia's position within Asia;
- In 2004, Mongolia joined the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD);
- In 1991, Mongolia applied for membership in the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), and in 1997, created the PECC National Committee, or *MonPECC*, becoming an auxiliary member in 2000. Now the goal is to upgrade this status into a full membership;
- Actions were taken to join the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD), a Track Two arm of the Six Party Talks on Korean Peninsula nuclear issues; however, Mongolia's admission, scheduled for the April 2005 Seoul Meeting, was delayed due to North Korea's suspension of the talks. The American side has notified that as soon as North Korea rejoins the Six Party Talks, Mongolia's admission will be secured;

- Mongolia applied for APEC membership in 2003; however this bid stalled due to a temporary moratorium on new membership until 2007;
- Mongolia became a member of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).
- In July of 2006 Mongolia signed the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC)<sup>3</sup> and bilaterally seeks support for joining the ASEAN Plus Three mechanism as a fourth partner;
- Mongolia participated in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)-sponsored Tumen River Project;
- Mongolia took part in some ESCATO projects, such as the Asian Highway Project (Mongolian International Security and Nuclear Weapon Free Status, 2002.)
- In addition, active participation exists in various Track Two settings, such as the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), as well as the annual Conference on NEA economic cooperation, held in Niigata, Japan.

Within this regard, it should be mentioned that favorable domestic economic conditions are gradually emerging in Mongolia to ensure the nation's place in the regional economy. Between 1993 and 2003 the net growth of Mongolia's economy averaged at 3.3 percent, while in 2004 the economy grew at a record 10.6 percent. Inflation is under control, with its consistent rate below 10.0 percent between 1998 and 2003, in sharp contrast to the 1995 inflation rate at 53.1 percent.

#### *Nuclear weapon-free status*

In accordance with principles of the National Security Concept of Mongolia and within the framework of the policy of safeguarding the nation's security by political and diplomatic means, in 1992, Mongolia declared itself as a nuclear weapon-free zone (NWFZ). Since this initiative gained the full support of the international community, and the UN General Assembly began to deliberate on this issue.

The General Assembly passed three resolutions recognizing Mongolia's unique NWFZ status, and pledged further support; the Secretary-General has also three times reported to the General Assembly on this initiative.

The following are Mongolia's achievements in an effort to gain international support for the declared NWFZ:

(1) The 2000 Assurance by five nuclear powers was an important step toward strengthening Mongolia's political security, and is recognized as such by the UN. To obtain this assurance, the Mongolian Parliament in May 2002 adopted the Law on Nuclear Weapon-Free Status;

(2) The Non-Aligned Movement has supported Mongolia's NWF status at its 2000 Durban Conference, and at the 2003 Kuala Lumpur Conference

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<sup>3</sup> The Mongolian Minister of Foreign Affairs attended the ARF Meeting. See *Foreign Relations*, 2005. No 10 (164), p 8: Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

respectively, and stipulated that its international recognition and institutionalization would be a major step toward establishing a nuclear non-proliferation regime in the Asia Pacific;

(3) Mongolia's NWF status was further deliberated at the 2001 Sapporo Consultative Meeting involving the experts from five nuclear powers, Mongolia and the UN, where the status was given a definition, and issued specific recommendations for obtaining international recognition and institutionalization. These recommendations serve as guidelines for steps to be taken ahead.

Pursuant to the Sapporo Recommendations, in early 2002, Mongolia submitted written proposals to Russia and the PRC, and in April and July of the same year, received supporting responses from Moscow and Beijing. At present the Mongolian side works to engage the two neighbors to launch tripartite negotiations.

We are grateful that the UN General Assembly Resolution No. 55/33S includes non-nuclear aspects of Mongolia's security, such as economic and ecological vulnerability, in addition to NWF status, and conducts relevant surveys (UNDP Mongolia 2005).

#### *Participation in UN peacekeeping missions*

Mongolia pursues the policy of participating in UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs), which is perceived as a duty of a sovereign member of that organization. At present, our Armed Forces possess three military teams and over 20 trained military observers ready to serve under UN mandate (Choijamts 2005). During the past period, 18 observers from our Armed Forces have fulfilled their missions in three PKOs run by the UN, in the Democratic republic of Congo, Sudan and Western Sahara. At present, the Mongolian Government made a decision to send a 250-strong military team to a UN operation in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, the goal is to broaden the scope of Mongolia's participation in UN PKOs by including police (law enforcement) and civilian observers, as well as uniformed military; and thus continue to contribute in the cause of maintaining global security. As Mongolia needs external expertise and financial support in enhancing PKO capacity, we are deeply grateful for and motivated by the US pledge to offer training and technical assistance in this task.

#### *Mongolia and the Koreas*

As one of the few nations with diplomatic relations with both Koreas, Mongolia has a unique opportunity to offer certain contributions in solving the Korean Peninsula crisis and mediate in helping North Korea to become a more open country. Let me in this sense recall one example. On June 24, 2005, we hosted in Ulaanbaatar a round-table dedicated to the fifth anniversary of the inter-Korean summit, to which invited was, for the first time, the delegation from the DPRK Social Sciences Association, headed by its general secretary. This can be seen as evidence of growing interest in Mongolia as a fellow country formerly with the same political system, and as a sign of relative openness on behalf of the DPRK. More surprisingly, their head of delegation, with his e-mail address inscribed on his business card – itself a novelty for North Koreans – has offered to assist in setting a contact between my Institute and the like-minded counterpart in DPRK, and sent to me the address of their new web page. Therefore, organizing joint bilateral academic conferences and round-tables with North Korean scholars will be crucial in promoting our policies and

building mutual trust and confidence. Needless to say that we would appreciate a certain input, financial and otherwise, to see the materialization of this vision of ours.

## Conclusion

It is obvious that due to enormous political, social, economic, cultural and historical diversity and the presence of numerous unresolved issues among states, the process of the formation of a multilateral security mechanism in NEA will not be an easy task and will take time. However, positive prerequisites are already there, such as economic integration and growing interdependence within broader East Asia, and a history of trying to resolve disputed issues through consensus and negotiations that will gradually emerge as a set of norms. It is therefore the responsibility of countries in the region to join efforts in consolidating these positive developments instead of halting them by overemphasizing the challenges. In particular, the key players should bear a lion's share of this common responsibility.

Mongolia actively supports East Asian integration and formation of a multilateral security mechanism to emerge in NEA and moreover, aspires to join it as a member. It will be in the best developmental and security interests of all NEA nations to have among their ranks a free, democratic, peace-loving, developed and prosperous Mongolia.

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